

Introduction to the NHAL Preferred Alternative

In the 1920s, the State Legislature established the Northern Highland and American Legion State Forests in Oneida, Vilas, and Iron counties. The two forests were combined in 1968. Today, the NHAL is Wisconsin's largest state owned property, with about 225,000 acres of state-owned land within a 345,000 acre boundary.

The Preferred Alternative provides proposals for the general management direction of the NHAL. It is based on state law, NHAL vision and goals, extensive assessments, property staff experience, and public input. The Preferred Alternative combines aspects of many alternatives that were presented at the last stage of this process, in January 2002. An interdisciplinary team including staff from fisheries, wildlife, recreation, endangered resources, water resources, and forestry created the Preferred Alternative. The next step will be the development of the Draft Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement following further detailed analysis and public input.

For detailed supporting information please refer to the "Shaping the Future" source book, master planning fact sheets, and the Northern State Forest Assessments. (See the literature order form.)

Purpose of State Forests

The Department's master planning rule (Wisconsin Administrative Code NR44) identifies that the land management, recreational opportunities, and facility development outlined in the NHAL Master Plan must meet the statutory purpose of the property's designation. In this case, the property is a state forest as defined in Wisconsin Statutes 28. The purposes and benefits of state forests are outlined in the following language of 28.04 (2):

(a) The department shall manage the state forests to benefit the present and future generations of residents of this state, recognizing that the state forests contribute to local and statewide economies and to a healthy natural environment. The department shall assure the practice of sustainable forestry and use it to assure that state forests can provide a full range of benefits for present and future generations. The department shall also assure that the management of state forests is consistent with the ecological capability of the state forest land and with the long-term maintenance of sustainable forest communities and ecosystems. These benefits include soil protection, public hunting, protection of water quality, production of recurring forest products, outdoor recreation, native biological diversity, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, and aesthetics. The range of benefits provided by the department in each state forest shall reflect its unique character and position in the regional landscape.

(b) In managing the state forests, the department shall recognize that not all benefits under par. (a) can or should be provided in every area of a state forest.

(c) In managing the state forests, the department shall recognize that management may consist of both active and passive techniques.

The management direction outlined in the Preferred Alternative meets this statutory purpose. The Preferred Alternative must also implement the draft vision and goals for the property, which were developed in an earlier stage of the public involvement process. The draft vision and goals can be found on the next page.

Draft Vision Statement

The Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest is a dynamic environment comprised of a variety of biological communities that contribute to the diversity of ecosystems in the region. The state forest provides a range of cultural, social, economic and ecological benefits, within its capabilities, for present and future generations. The unique, aesthetic character of the NHAL State Forest and the quality of its waters are perpetuated and enhanced. The forest is managed in consultation with federal, tribal, local and other governments, and with other people who care about the forest, including those who live, work and recreate in and around it.

Draft Property Goals

1. Provide a diversity of terrestrial and aquatic biological communities, including a range of forest types and age classes, with emphasis on communities that are special to the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest.
2. Maintain and enhance aesthetic qualities of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest.
3. Identify and protect endangered and threatened resources, historic properties, and areas of geological, archaeological or cultural significance.
4. Provide a variety of renewable forest products consistent with forest capabilities.
5. In consultation with tribal governments, provide for the availability and enhancement of treaty resources.
6. Provide a variety of recreational settings and activities, ranging from primitive to developed, consistent with resource capabilities.
7. Provide a diversity of hunting, trapping, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities.
8. Protect and enhance wild resource values such as solitude, remoteness, and the sights and sounds of a natural environment.
9. Resolve or minimize conflict among different types of recreational uses and among various types of forest uses and management activities.
10. Provide a variety of educational opportunities for state forest visitors.